Pic by Denis O' Regan

balancing on a very precarious pedestal at the moment, certainly did not please me. If they intend to use this early Beatles stance as their base, inject their own ideas into the basic songs and subsequently move on in their own direction, then fine, but they did not show any originality at all at Rafters.

I was right to believe that an excellent R&B band was hiding away, somewhere behind the Beatles suits, vocals, mannerisms, dances, haircuts and songs. At times they managed to eclipse the image and show a hint of their capabilities, capabilities that could well suffocate within their own very limited field.

So, I went to the bar bought a pint and wondered what all the similar groups must think of The Pleasers. I am talking about cabaret bands all over the country who look, play and write identical songs to The Pleasers but who never achieve even a mention in the music press and don't complain because they admit to being simple novelty entertainers.

Actually, there were two or three high spots during the set and funnily enough they were the three songs that are available on record, 'Billy', and 'Rock And Roll Radio' from the Hope And Anchor album and the encore which not surprisingly was the single 'The Kids Are Alright', the latter being almost identical to the Who's original and demonstrating the pointlessness of this band perfectly. A few kids at the front showed essential enthusiasm while most of us clapped politley and walked away still bitching about the lack of mini skirts (and rock'n'roll).

MICK MIDDLES

TOM ROBINSON: street or straight music?

TRB, at contact breaking point

Tom Robinson Band
Music Machine

FOUR SOLID hours of waiting. I couldn't move in case I lost my place and the DJ kept playing *whole sides* of Genesis albums. Incongruous wasn't the word. All three levels of the Music Machine were jammed with discreet middle-aged gays, Hampstead jollies on a slumming expedition, mums and dads, lesbians, teeny-boppers and punks. Had they come to see the man who had laid his private life on the line, or simply to gawk at some deviant oddity?

Yet another 20 minutes of 'Seconds Out' was prevented by the appearance of 90 Degrees Inclusive. They play reggae with a disconcerting HM tinge, clipped, chinking rhythms punctuated by short booming rock riffs. They played warmly — if a little too loose at times — and dragged Tom on, dressed as a policeman, to demand a toke of the spliff they were passing around. They seemed to lose power at points in their set, but they did manage to get me balled out for dancing on my seat.

And then it's TRB! The audience acts like it's Nuremberg all over again and the stage is a-dazzle with flashing lights. Burning straight into 'Don't Take No For An Answer', they played a kicking, angry set. I've never seen them from so far away but still managed to get singed by the fire they breath into their music. The old favourites were all rolled out; 'Grey Cortina', 'Winter Of '79', 'Right On Sister' (during which I got pogoed on by a lesbian couple) and so on. Their two new numbers, 'Too True To Be Good' and 'Day Of The Jackal', both seemed rather repetitive on a first hearing, although the latter's catchy beat made up for this.

During 'Power In The Darkness' I began to feel uneasy. The glib manner in which the audience returned Tom's catchphrases was redolent of the knees-up mentality that causes people to shout 'Behind you!' at pantomimes. Tom told them that they should be shouting their rage in the streets, not just in the safety of the Music Machine, but I doubt if many took his advice. You'd have trouble sorting out the converts from the politically blind in this audience.

A resounding success? Yes and no. The audience went ga-ga and TRB can still rock with power, simplicity *and* style. But TRB means contact. Contact with the band, with Tom's ideas and with the audience. As they get bigger this contact will obviously diminish. Already droves of professional liggers are jiving backstage, keeping the real people from the audience away from the band. The EMI mandarins are pressuring Tom to tone down his rabble-rousing and are surrounding the band with bouncers and flunkeys. Mountainous security men stopped me and many of Tom's loyal fans from seeing him. This is *not* Tom's fault, but the star-makers seem set to turn him into a vacuous, slogan-spouting cardboard cut-out. Street or straight music, Tom; you'd better decide which side you're on.

JOHN GILL

The Pleasers/ The Heat
Manchester

I JUST had to see The Pleasers. Partly because of my belief that behind the labels a high energy R&B band was lurking, and partly out of sheer curiosity.

As it was, Rafters was half empty and the crowd was the dullest that I have ever seen there (in fact most of them were the disco crowd who went purely for the night out). The most disappointing aspect of all was (alas) the complete lack of schoolgirls which made a mockery of the proposed 'shortest skirt' competition. So much for media manipulation.

But first, a mention for the support band The Heat. Now this lot have improved 100 per cent since their grey days as a typical bandwagon punk outfit. They have tightened up no end and sparks of high originality fly out of the newer songs. The pace seems slower, substituting a 'bouncy' feel for the old manic speed. Most of the visual attention is grabbed by the Foxton-style bassist who angrily tugs the strings whilst staring straight into the eyes of the crowd. On this particular night though, the band were hindered by the very limited amount of stage room, the singer stood at the extreme left of the stage with the guitarist crammed directly behind him. At times they did seem to sag into dullness it's true, but provided they continue to experiment and improve I see no reason why they shouldn't be looking forward to the next couple of years with wide eyed anticipation.

Now The Pleasers, who are Action Man.

What else? A strong rhythm section in drummer Nick Dodd and bass player Brian di Vito who is quite capable of finding some vantage point in the audience and playing half the set from there.

Not at the Roxy though — that wasn't played for laughs at all but although — or possibly because — no-one was there to hear it, they turned in the proverbial blinder.

The eminently commercial 'One Of These Days' and the bottle-neck guitar in 'Murder In My Heart' were high spots but come to think of it, it was all pretty extraordinary for a band that's only played a handful of gigs.

No, not that. Extraordinary for any band at all.

LINDSEY BOYD

The Magnets
Roxy

SOMETIMES IT goes like this. The Magnets, a new band, played the Roxy and no-one was there. Somewhere between their desire to get the event over with as soon as possible and the realisation that there was nothing to be lost, they played a set that even they must have been pleased with and that many of their more lauded contemporaries would have done well to watch.

This review is in fact based on several gigs, but I've chosen to pin it down to the Roxy one because, ostensibly the bleakest, it seemed also to be typical of the kind of experience all bands have to go through at some time. Essential therefore not to be swept under the carpet. The fact that The Magnets totally transcended such an unhopeful environment was proof of the wealth and fame that are surely soon to come!

Firstly, their songs. Not complex in any boring or self conscious way but with well thought out and interesting structures. 'Out Of Print' for instance, with its clever — but not *too* clever — time changes and the rather grim lyrics ('You say you're unobtainable/You say you're unavailable . . . but you're no late edition/You're out of print').

They're also impossible to pin down. I puzzled for ages over the apparent incongruity between sound and vision and eventually concluded that they're about two fashions ahead of themselves.

A lot of the twin lead guitar stuff going down between Bob Barnett and vocalist Steve Clear is, by virtue of its speed and proficiency, reminiscent of some of the British bands who started up in the early Seventies, notably Wishbone Ash and Rare Bird. But on the other hand they're not in the least dated (and they sure as hell ain't Power Pop). Barnett in fact looks like the perfect prototype showroom dummy, stonking about the stage like the latest incarnation of

THE MAGNETS: impossible to pin down

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